

A MINISTERIAL RESPONSE TO SPIRITUAL NEED

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A Professional Project  
Presented to  
the Faculty of the School of Theology  
at Claremont

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Ministry

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by  
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June 1976

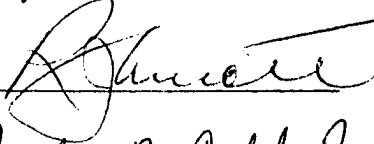
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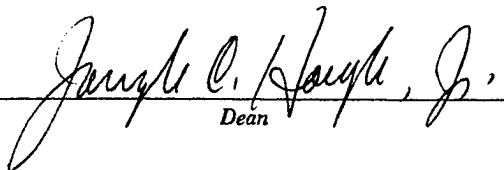
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**DOCTOR OF MINISTRY**

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## PREFACE

I am a minister, not a theologian, psychologist, or other type of professional. This role brings specific influences upon me, as I share with all people the task of perceiving reality, interpreting its subjective value, and intentionally living each day. When I work in the role of a minister, I perceive several different realities.

For instance, as a novice in the local parish, I might see my ministerial work and "reality" generally as tasks to be accomplished, i.e., preaching, teaching, finance campaigns, attendance-raisers. Reality is then interpreted as the mastery and relationship to such things as mass communication, record-keeping, recruitment and training of workers, application of information, etc. A minister of this sort would not easily respond to any project about spirituality, for instance, unless s/he could relate to it as a task.

With some reflection, however, these tasks cease to be meaningful as "ultimate concerns" in themselves;<sup>1</sup> and a person may see through the tasks of ministry to the people serving and being served. Now, one can decide that people are the "task"; and a more subtle form of

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<sup>1</sup>"Ultimate concerns" is a direct reference to the basic description used by Paul Tillich, Dynamics of Faith (New York: Harper & Row, 1957).

manipulation is studied as the minister seeks to learn the "hows" of personal growth, confrontation, moral development, etc. to influence others. The ministerial response to any need is predictably a design to change people by a proposed program or argument and improvement of one's social skills and manipulation of psychological insights.<sup>2</sup>

But finally, we ministers may confess our limits, know ourselves more honestly, and sense the futility of "making" new people out of others. Still another reality is seen and interpreted. Now, the people themselves dominate any task intended to involve them. No longer is ministry the adoption of a task and "running with it in some great race," even if one may be so inclined for all righteous reasons. For much more is involved than objective tasks! In simplest terms, Christian understanding of God's love, justice, and righteousness and the example of Christ's being, comes to bear upon the individual's perception; and this reality cannot be interpreted in tasks which do not take account of the people affecting the tasks. So to approach people and their needs as tasks themselves is to corrupt the Word. Only by being in a state of grace and living in the realm of God's justice can one truly be in ministry, communicating these understandings and being

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<sup>2</sup>This approach reflects the "I-it" relationship characterized by Martin Buber, I & Thou (Edinburgh: Clark, 1953).

instrumental in God's dynamic power and demand for people.

To move through these three levels of functional approaches to ministry is to transcend to some degree our natural human tendencies to objectify what is really subjective, to simplify what is complex, and eventually to alienate what belongs unified. So through critical reflection and confrontation with ourselves and God, ministers may come to see people as ministry's focus and central to reality, interpreted by God's Logos and Spirit and calling for one's own participation with people and God for the ministry's vitality.

Out of this last approach to life, I come as a minister. With people considered over objective task, I look at our situation, listen to people, and try to interpret needs, and make a "ministerial response." So in this project, there is a natural movement from describing a perceived, spiritual need (Chapter I) to reflecting upon this need within one's self-understanding (Chapter II). That a need exists, we first acknowledge. What the need is we must clarify individually. Then follows a crucial question: "Can I make a valid healthy response to this perceived need of people?" In other words, is there a point of contact between us where I may relate to and benefit others? So interpreting reality is followed by discerning human relationships (Chapter III), then actively trying a ministerial response which "makes a difference" in people's

lives (Chapter IV).

Given this project's purpose to describe a ministerial response to a perceived and interpreted reality, there still remains open the question of values. How shall I value my perceptions and responses? My governing intent throughout this project is not to declare what is "good" or what is right," but to be "responsible" in the Niebuhrian sense,<sup>3</sup> to find what is "fitting" in this situation.

If, as a minister, I approached people as things to be made, then as H. Richard Niebuhr said:

Man--the maker can reject material which does not suit his purposes. It is not so when the material is ourselves in our individual and in our social nature. Our body, our sensations, our impulses--these have been given us; whether to have them or not have them is not under our control. We are with respect to these things not as an artist is to his material but as the ruler of a city is to its citizens. He must take them for better or worse.<sup>4</sup>

This attempt to be responsible is not final, complete, or decisive. It is a moment in my personal process to relate carefully with God and others through self-understanding. Yet if personal growth were the sole purpose for this project, I would not be so bold or foolish as to communicate this process of mine publicly. Publicizing such a topic seems justified only because the external pressure of human need comes to bear upon us all and we all

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<sup>3</sup>H. Richard Niebuhr, The Responsible Self (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), Ch. 1.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 51-2.

share the common task of interpreting and responding in some way. If we desire to share a responsible and authentic stance as "ministers", then we can benefit from sharing our insights and means of caring for others. And the value of our careful steps and self-examination is far more important for a "fitting" response than final agreement with subjective conclusions. Let us only begin together with the same real concern for an authentic ministry.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am indebted to many people for their influence upon this project. A special word of appreciation goes to Miss Harriet Morley, without whose support this work would not have developed. My gratitude is also given to Drs. Ivan and Frieda McCollom for their special encouragement and consideration during the project's writing.



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## ABSTRACT

A minister is called upon to make a unique response to personal concerns within the human community. This ministerial response is characterized by finding a fitting way to care for human needs. Given a current spiritual need expressed by the American people, a minister responsibly cares by 1) analyzing the spiritual need in its historical/psychological/social context, 2) reflecting upon one's own understandings of spirituality, 3) discerning the various relationships within which we communicate, and 4) engaging actively in this world. The author's individual work through these steps serves as an example of the process shared by all who endeavor a ministerial response.

## CHAPTER I

## TROUBLES WITHIN AND WITHOUT: SPIRITUAL NEED

What is happening in Western American culture today? Most people don't even pretend to know, but they do share some common experiences, tendencies, and interpretations. People are experiencing a troubled environment and disturbing restlessness, bewildered by the voids and break-down of order about them, and drawing upon only a dubious inheritance of wise traditions. Following a typical American tendency, people are seeking answers first, theory later; and for the religious minded in the 1970's, the popular answer is some sort of "spirituality" for the troubles.

"Pastor, we need you to lead us in a spiritual life retreat, because we're so lifeless; and you can give us a lift."

"I'd like to help, but where are the people in their own spiritual growth or understanding?"

"They'll leave the content completely up to you, whatever you want to do or say is OK with us."

"Do you want me to speak, then? Or pray? Or organize something?"

"Well, in total, it comes to 5 speeches plus Sunday's sermon. In addition, you have about 4 hours on Saturday to do 'whatever.'"

"Oh."

"I feel dead. I've got no life. I want to help other people and things are such a mess, but I just can't get up and do anything about it. I've lost my spirit, and no one else has got any either. If only there could be some life in this church. . . If only people got enthusiastic about these heavy concerns. . . . look, preacher, give us a really good sermon to shake us up. . . follow it maybe by a prayer that really moves us and fills us up. What we really need around here is some spirit!"

"Would you pray for my mother who is going to the dentist tomorrow?"

"Since I don't know her personally, why have you asked me?"

"You're a more spiritual person than me, so God may listen to you. Her name is Mary."

"What you ministers do in your churches is just plain garbage, when you should be offering the spiritual experiences of liturgy and the arts to your laity."

"But everyone finds spirituality in a different way! It's relative--isn't it?"

"But spirituality for you is like a can of beer--low-grade!"

"Well, who cares how you get it, as long as it works?"

Conversations like the above occur more often than you might think. Such requests come to the minister of a church and the expectation is that the minister knows something about the desired life-experiences and the "thing" called spirituality. Such requests and expectations are not coming from an occasional town-fool, either, but are rising from a common situation shared by a growing number of common folk. As one layman, Fred Replogle, explained in his article about clergy, "Under Lay Scrutiny,"

Much of the time ministers are spiritual caretakers. This is noble, necessary, and a paramount need in a parish. . . . The minister should be--and can again become--the person to whom individuals and community enterprises look for spiritual guidance in building a better society.<sup>1</sup>

To relate these expectations and requests with our troubled environment is to raise the religious issue of

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<sup>1</sup>F. Replogle, "Under Lay Scrutiny," Christian Century, VII:1 (January, 1976).

"spirituality" for consideration. To accept these same expectations and requests as a ministerial concern is to take the issue seriously in determining a response.

Indeed, human spirituality has become an issue for people in the '70's, and even for the reactionary church membership, human spirituality is constantly raised whenever the community becomes concerned with motivation, enthusiasm, life-spirit, purpose or a sense of worship. In past days, the middle and upper class people were fairly quiet about this subject, preferring to focus on intellectual concepts and referring to the "spirit" of those lower-class poor folks (who have something that "we" don't!). Now, however, troubles, pressures, and crises are pressing upon the consciousness of the complacent WASP as well, and while a few individuals have always been self-motivated about spiritual matters, now the general populace is expressing a need for spirituality in response to external stress, if not in desire for an unseen life-dimension.

What kind of situation do we find ourselves in today, that it may be stimulating a deep need within people? Accounting only for actual world events, we may speak in the imagery of a breaking storm to describe the rapid changes and overwhelmingly powerful crises in effect, bringing complex chain-reactions beyond any specialist's scope of foresight and altering people's perspective on

troubles, to the point of confusion, fragmentation, and grief. We do not even need to list the crises anymore to feel their impact; for even if we do not carry the world's concerns within us, we are reminded by newspaper, radio, TV, and party-talk. Our humor reflects the state of our weariness; for humor reflects the inadequacy we feel in facing our troubles. Consider the man who said, "I owe the federal government \$10,000, the state \$5,000, the city \$1,000, and I'm 20¢ overdue on my library card!" Humor must be expressing our state of mind, when the following "BC" comic strip elicits laughs:

(A newscaster blandly relating the news) "Good evening. A giant tidal wave, set off by an earthquake, leveled the seaport city of Hoggsburg early today, leaving no survivors. Elsewhere in the news, two officials of the national gun club were beaten to death by an anti-gun extremist, wielding a sock full of split-shot sinkers. In sports tonight, Merl Scruggs slammed his 75th home run into the upper deck in left field ironically shattering both: Babe Ruth's record and his mother's skull. In the weather tonight, tornado warnings are still in effect as rains continue threatening to reach flood levels before morning. . . . now for the lighter side of the news, today. . . . Fritz von Kruger Kruger crashed into<sup>2</sup> the empire state building in his home-made zeppelin."

The message is that times are bad, because of natural disasters, human expression of violence, tragedy, and probably most of all, human stupidity.

Too harsh? We could speak of our economy and the pressure many people are coming under just to earn

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<sup>2</sup>Johnny Hart, "BC Cartoon," Los Angeles Times (November 23, 1975).

adequate food and shelter or of the international level global crisis of inadequate food and shelter, given recent natural disasters, national exploitation, and increasing inflation. We can look at blatant signs of discrimination between peoples, of violence, of isolating pride, of wars, massive starvation, and cruelties of the rich and powerful. Then recall shades of the '60's, when large numbers of people marched, protested, swore a lot, and played the party game, "Can you beat this for injustice?" It was easier then to discuss the evils of institutions, nations, and classes of people, because people had not waded deep enough into the issues to see the shocking implications for their own lives and future. And people grew rather silent as we turned into the '70's. The problems had not disappeared, but instead they had grown to overwhelming size. The people grew silent and reflective and even the militant liberals went underground with determination to shape long-term strategies. On the whole, people have not displayed the inner resources necessary to even examine the problems further.

Consider that many people have pursued an all-the-time, happily-ever-after happiness (promoted in the '50's as the balm for world war casualties). These people have now been disillusioned, as tragedies have disturbed their lives. Or consider that many people have worked in an ethical fashion for a simple, neatly-ordered, swept-clean

sort of world-environment. They have found increasing complications, chaos, and voids of meaning instead, as painful changes have intruded into their lives. Or consider that many people believed in our nation and church leaders as though they were our saviors and saints. Now we have experienced a general crisis in confidence, as people have lost much confidence and trust in each other because of widespread corruption. And from these many inner losses and massive discouragements have come a high level of grieving throughout our communities. Our old ways have failed or have been lost.

Whether people put on their outside blinders and withdraw within themselves or try to turn off their feelings and needs and run too hard, too feverishly, after something that doesn't exist, either way it has become increasingly consuming of personal energy to avoid the grief and the chaotic storm around and within us. So perhaps the key word to characterize the concern of many people is quite simply--pain.

Today, pain magnifies the universal human desire "to pass beyond oneself as one now is."<sup>3</sup> And in the midst of losing old ways and grieving over America's shortcomings, we sense more than ever realities beyond our control

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<sup>3</sup>A quote by Beatrice Hinkle from Dorothy Phillips, The Choice is Always Ours (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), p. 31.



that determine our existence. Obviously, people in stress can reject the hostile or indifferent world they experience and retreat. Or they can look for fresh resources, new alternatives, a savior, that is, some form of outside help.

With painful experience motivating the need, it is a reconciling or vital experience being sought for the answer. And naturally, a strict natural theology of revealed truth will be inadequate. The "Word" may speak of salvation, but the people in their alienation may still lack any point of contact.

The poetry of Marian Grossberger reflects the old theological question, "Where is my God?" within the experiential context of today.

Psalm 42: 1-3

As a deer longs for a stream of cool water, so I long  
for you, God, I thirst for you, the living God;  
When can I go and worship in your presence? Day and  
night I cry, and tears are my only food;  
All the time my enemies ask me, "Where is your God?"

Where is my God?  
He's all around,  
Not up in the air, spaced out,  
But in space, too;  
Not down and out,  
But in and with.  
My enemies are my closest companions:  
Doubt.  
Fear.  
Narrowness.  
Rejection.  
And so, with closed eyes  
And ears and mouth and heart  
I starve.  
Hungry.

Needing.  
 Wanting.  
 I thirst.  
 God, I'm thirsty!  
 For you.

As I walk down the city streets, Third and Grand,  
 Lights flashing, stop, go, wait, and a siren in the  
 distance,

I ask for my daily bread  
 (not crumbs, not Wonder Bread wrapped in plastic).  
 My bread is your love, a wonder,  
 Wrapped in the real-ness of life,  
 Even (especially) here at Third and Grand,  
 God, make me understand  
 That you're not a throw-away,  
 Or a pull-tab dispensable,  
 Nor a pre-packaged tray  
 That is incomprehensible,  
 But living, breathing, bread for the making,  
 Caring, sharing love for the taking,

From your  
 Young  
 Old  
 Black  
 White  
 Rich  
 Poor  
 Hands.

Feed me, for I am that deer longing for water;  
 Give me drink when I cry out to you, my God.

Understandably, people seek a point of contact with  
 God. And with the increased pressure and pain of the times,  
 perhaps even a discourse with God through Christ as Emil  
 Brunner describes is not enough.<sup>4</sup> There is no sense  
 addressing God today nor wondering what God speaks to us if  
 God is outside the experience of our reality and of no  
 effect. In other words, God must be known incarnate today,

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<sup>4</sup>Emil Brunner, Natural Theology (London: Bles,  
 1946).

as Spirit. Without being particularly astute in religion, people may yet sense the role of the Spirit as the ancient Jewish myth of creation described it in Genesis 1:1-2;

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit (or Wind) of God was brooding over the face of the waters.

Haven't we become increasingly aware of the formlessness and voids about us and within us; and don't some environmentalists get almost nostalgic for the earth to return to its pure, embryonic state of the beginning, as being somehow better in its formlessness than in the chaos that we humans have generated since? "And the Spirit moved upon the face of the deep," depicts Spirit as the dynamic principle of life, "the principle of spontaneous movement and activity,"<sup>5</sup> as an active, winged, swift-moving being present from the beginning of time. And like a bird over her nest of eggs, the Spirit broods over the waters, bringing forth the creation of the world, having the spontaneous capacity to act independent of the material world or the verbal cognition of the LOGOS. Without full awareness, yet responding in accord with a collective human expression, we may say that we need the Spirit in response to this chaotic, dying world we know. We need a brooding, motherly life force which finds us hurting and grieving and facing the

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<sup>5</sup>C. G. Jung, Psyche and Symbol (New York: Doubleday, 1958), p. 67.

void, seeking new life, new order, and the fresh movement of new meaning. It is nothing short of a fresh, new birth that people want in the face of death-like struggles.

But even here, do the people in general know what they are asking for? Some people argue that it is best to avoid any encounter with the Spirit because the Spirit-nation is an arbitrary, frightening power. Others trust the Christian revelation that God's Spirit was realized in Jesus Christ for its true nature; thus God's presence experienced in His Spirit today is consistent with Christ and trustable. Believing this, we can listen to another Biblical story, in the New Testament book of Mark (10:35-40), giving us a conversation between two disciples and Jesus which deals with this very question. Two brothers, James and John, approach Jesus saying, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." And He said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" They said, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left in your glory." But Jesus replied, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" After the brothers state their ableness, Jesus then proceeds to promise them that they will drink and be baptized in His way; but He warns them also that He is not the one to determine the consequences.

This story reflects our common human approach to fulfillment with our needs. We rather demand the power/spirit that we desire, trusting that we know best our needs; and we say to Jesus, in a sense, "Grant us the Spirit." And the reply we hear, confirmed from deep within us, is "You do not know what you are asking." And the confusion and vagueness of our current understandings would confirm this as a fact. Even if intellectually we come to a doctrine or concept of the Spirit, there is the matter of drinking the cup and being baptized in the suffering and pain which Jesus in history went through.

If it is the pain of our inner conflicts and the pain of outer turmoil that has brought some people to seek the Spirit for help, will these same people now accept more pain at the stirrings of the Spirit in their lives? The best example of our plight can be found in a metaphor. The lesson comes from the plight of our national forests, with the horseshoe valley of Yosemite serving as the specific example. When the Indians lived in the valley, it prospered, because every fall, before moving to warmer weather, the Indians set the forest on fire. And a slow-burning, mild fire would burn away the underbrush, the small trees and the remaining ground cover and then be quenched by winter rains. In the spring, animals would return to graze on the new growth, and the Indians would find a healthy forest and abundant wildlife to live among. Then

when we moved the Indians out and instituted the national forests, the rangers subsequently guarded the forests from all fire. The yearly crop of new trees grew up thick and blocked the sunlight from reaching the ground. The dead ground covering became a thick blanket that choked the ground and even prevented decay. The animals weakened from the poor food supply and grew scarce. And now, after many years of this, one careless spark (most likely to occur in the dry months of summer) will set off a tinder box fire, so hot and so fast, that it will be a holocaust, consuming the large trees as well as the small ones and many animals not quick enough to escape. The entire forest can be destroyed.

Today some people fear that we have avoided the fire or pain in our national, social, and personal living too long. Having suppressed our struggles and moral consequences so long, we face an accounting or exposé of such magnitude that a spark might blow our world apart and destroy us.

And what if the Spirit is the fire which we fear? What if facing the Spirit is painful, as facing truth may weigh heavily upon falsity and facing love may sharply disturb the loveless? The metaphor of the forest speaks only too plainly. Obviously, a careful, prayerful, disciplined, open burning (filled with risk) is necessary for our very survival and must be accepted before it is too late. And

fortunately, some people are not avoiding our world's condition, and some people are not avoiding their personal pains and griefs which must be realized for growth; and the Spirit is nonetheless being sought by those trusting that beside the judgment there is also the basic grace of new life.

The search for the Spirit is on. And for those with the 19th century pioneer mentality of carving out the millenium in the great wilderness of the West, each person takes on the task of spirituality with the enthusiasm of a barn-raising or perhaps with the drama of a shoot-out. Certain men and women are quickly publishing "how to make the Spirit work for you" in response to the latest wave of Holy Spirit revivals, or they are leading retreats/ encounters on a "get yours now" thrust. More conservative people look for recipes from ancient traditions while the radicals find "it" in anything from super cinemas to motorcycle maintenance.

What will we ministers say if we are asked for guidance in this quest? What if we receive actual requests for help like the ones quoted at the beginning of this chapter? Will we reach for our prayer workbooks, ten easy meditations on spirituality, ten easy reasons why the subject is too relative to deal with, last year's entertaining retreat outline on the spirit of good cheer, our sermon-from-the-barrel on the spirit's role in the reformation....

or will we accept the responsibility of facing our own understandings, assumptions, painful situations, lack of solutions....and then what??

So if I am confronted with this need by someone depending upon the freedom within Christian community, the direction of God's involvement in history, and the inspiration of the Spirit as a way of life, my ministerial response must have the integrity of being my own expression of faith and reflect a concern that leads to concrete actions and relationships. And if this integrity and reflected concern is missing on my part (the minister), we experience that puzzling exchange when a need is expressed and then only an awkward silence remains. There are no programs or intellectual concepts to short-circuit this subjective concern that involves us all. The questions still speak to us from the dialogue with Jesus: Do we know what we're asking for? Are we able to do what is required? At least we can know our own realities, reflect on our shared collective expressions, and minister from these.



## CHAPTER II

## REFLECTION ON OUR MEANS

More questions than answers are raised when the current human situation is described religiously as a "spiritual need." Avoiding careless assumptions, we are forced to reflect upon the religious words and images we employ, because these words and images bring with them particular interpretations of our situation. A fitting ministerial response to spiritual need begins with a thoughtful analysis of reality and then goes further in reflection to careful choices of interpretive words and images.

We may choose our words and images simply by repeating traditional formulae and symbols, by adopting socially popular theologies, or by developing words and images through our individual encounters and reflections. This latter way has been studied recently in psycholinguistics to give us insights for intentional (as well as informed) choice of interpretations.

The study of psycholinguistics gives us a basic definition for imagery and verbal processes (our means of interpretation). Imagery is a nonverbal, memory representation, commonly visual and of objects/events/persons. Besides status symbols (or mental pictures) imagery may also refer to nonverbal modes of functioning where the imagination mediates between ego/psyche. Verbal processes are

activities in the auditory-motor speech system, with "verbal" most commonly referring to words. The verbal processes may be both representational and mediational in function.

From 500 B.C. until 1913, the poet Simonides generally represented the common understanding of imagery and language in his statement, "Words are the images of things." Since then, debate has often favored one function to the exclusion of the other, and the most recently popular understanding has come from Watson, who rejected the entire importance of imagery, concluding that images were mere ghosts, without significance, since they didn't reproduce objective hard reality. A verbal emphasis resulted as words seemed more objective and central to thought, and this has continued up to the 1970's. The most recent concern has centered upon the powerful influence of language, images, and thought, where it is not clear which determines which. That is, images play such an important role in semantics, understanding, and reasoning that sometimes our thoughts are determined by the dominant images we hold or by the words that our understandings are expressed in.<sup>1</sup> Might our words and images shape our thoughts more than our thoughts determine our words? Evidence exists for an

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<sup>1</sup>A summary of this history is recorded by Allan Paivio, Imagery and Verbal Processes (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971).

influence that goes both ways; consequently any care we give now to our words shall not only indicate what our thoughts are, but our use of words gives them the power to shape and direct our thoughts.

Further, words have such power because of their intimate relationship with images. We know that imagery develops through "perceptual motor experiences" with concrete objects and events, and it serves as the dominant mode of thought in our earliest years of life.<sup>2</sup> Upon a base of images, our language develops; and quickly language directs our learning of new realities, still concrete and still highly imagery-bound. While these concrete realities continue to be mediated and represented by images throughout our lives, the verbal processes develop further to deal with "abstract" tasks. However, no dichotomy between language and images actually exists, as imagery may also be abstract and schematic and both processes interact in a bond of meaning and association.<sup>3</sup>

These insights inform us regarding the complexity of our interpretation task. For example, the word "spirituality" is abstract and arises from the linear process of

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<sup>2</sup>See the collaborative studies of Jerome S. Bruner, et al., Studies in Cognitive Growth (New York: Wiley, 1967) Ch. 1 and 2.

<sup>3</sup>Paivio, Chapter 3.

a verbal description. However, "spirituality" is also somehow grounded in early images and experiences we once had and subsequently associated with something called "spiritual." Language freed these associations from their concrete realities without losing their meaning. So our approach to our words and images must be respectful, rather than narrowly logical or naively pictorial. For our words to "mean" something, they must not only enable discourse, but also generate "alive" interpretations of our world views.

Accepting the role of both imagery and verbal processes in our reflection, we not only may beware the danger of one-sided, "armchair" abstraction; but also we might decide our theological approach. One can see the hermeneutical question of "how people come to know God" being solved with either an imagery bias or verbal bias alone. Those with an imagery bias have often favored the experiential approach to knowing God. We know God based upon our most basic natures, experiences, images, and consequent associations ("communion"). The actual types of imagery or experiences involved often are described as mysticism--communion with God--<sup>4</sup>while the formal approach can lead to natural theology.

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<sup>4</sup>Georgia Harkness, Mysticism (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1973), Chapter 1.

In contrast, those biased toward verbal processes place greatest emphasis upon God's Word, or Law, revealed to us from beyond our capacity to know, yet coming to us in a linear, verbal form of discourse. Revealed theology makes its case with logical arguments, using words with built-in limitations. At times, one is never sure whether the word's limitations determine the argument or the argument determines the words/conclusions. For example, Emil Brunner, as described by Heinz Zahrnt, decided to contrast two modes of faith with a motto: "Either mysticism or the Word!" "Faith is either based on man's religious experience, or grows from listening to the word of God."<sup>5</sup> Regardless of the rightness of his following arguments, the words "either/or" dictate the sole use of verbal processes in debate and enforce a restricted thinking about divisions.

If the truth lies in a relationship between experience and the Word, then neither of the two biases alone will help us come to know God or ourselves. And if both imagery and verbal processes are related in our word/thought formation, then our approach had best be "both/and." Theologically, both revealed and natural theology have value and perhaps support each other to aid our interpretation of reality. Psychologically, both verbal discourse

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<sup>5</sup>Heinz Zahrnt, The Question of God (New York: Harvest, 1966, p. 60f.

and individual experience are necessary for meaning to develop.

With this approach in mind, we can return to the task of interpreting the reality described in Chapter One by considering 1) Human Consciousness, 2) Human Experience, 3) Realities Beyond and Known Within, and 4) Spiritual Need within this Context.

### 1. HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS

Any intentional distinction and choice we wish to make is always from the perspective of our ego, or our center of conscious awareness. With a Jungian interpretation, simple understanding of the ego and its counterpart, the psyche, serves as a beginning, to clarify terms and functions.

The ego is that part of us which is "the complex factor to which all conscious contents are related. It forms . . . the center of the field of consciousness,"<sup>6</sup> assuming that conscious "contents" are known to us subjectively as representations. On the plane of consciousness, the aware ego seems to be our gateway between most external, empirical material and our inner human processes. The ego is capable of both speaking and imaging, of sorting,

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<sup>6</sup>C. G. Jung, Psyche and Symbol (New York: Doubleday, 1958, pp. 1-2.

filtering, deciding, escaping, determining, directing many activities; but it is not self-contained nor self-empowered.

The ego shares its plane of consciousness with the psyche or unconscious part of our human make-up. The distinction comes precisely as, according to Jung, the "knowing" ego "finds its limit when it comes up against the unknown."<sup>7</sup> Both the ego's self-awareness of consciousness and the psyche's revelation of itself are necessary for us to believe that an unconscious part to human make-up exists. Then what more can we say about its nature than the unconscious is as the conscious, but not the same and containing different elements? It seems relatively useless to describe the nature of the unknown from our conscious viewpoint or to make speculative remarks about its comparative size or value to the ego. But regarding its contents, Jung has given us considerable insights to the psyche's long-term symbolic representations of our experiences (comparable to the ego's short-term ones) and its mediational role in thought and creativity.

The unconscious psyche is both independent of and dependent upon our other human parts. Independently, elements from the unconscious sometimes "break into" conscious

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

awareness without relation to any desire or contextual personal experience. These elements seem derived from a different collective source or a different dimension of experience quite unknown to the ego. In a dependent fashion, however, the psyche's elements can symbolically or verbally "speak" to or depend upon the ego's concerns and priorities. If the ego seriously engages with this unconscious material, there results a dialogue where the psyche responds to the ego's questions and adaptations to other environments.

Such a relationship between the ego and psyche seems possible only through some "point of contact" or means to channel the elements which "feed" or supply the conscious and unconscious parts of our make-up.

In my own thinking, this meeting occurs through two functions which I call "mind" and "soul." In this use, mind and soul are reduced in meaning from their historical-socially-loaded senses to simple functions, because there appears no reason for their objective existence in their own right. As static objects, mind and soul are "dead"; but as dynamic, interrelated functions of our beings, they are much alive, in process and distinguishable.

The mind and soul functions are different from any human part because they do not exist within any one



part or in any one state. The functions are not subjects nor objects, but specialized channels with distinct characteristics and biases. Even channels may mislead unless we attribute to these functions a dynamic free force to fulfill themselves, so that the mind or soul function is always active in relaying and expressing elements in one form or another between the human parts, upon necessity for their very existence.

The existence and activity of the mind and soul functions find expression in the ego, for instance. The mind brings to consciousness verbal material and linear thought and direction. The mind can serve the ego as the tool for discriminating, categorizing, logical thought, word semantics, and such realities as truth, goal-seeking, law. The mind is largely operating with the means of adapting to an empirical, verbal, time and space-bound world, prizing rationality and knowledge in strictly objective terms. When we focus entirely upon this function both in our conscious and other parts, we may call the mind a dimension of our existence.

This is not to say that the soul function is unconcerned with adapting to the world, but the soul offers different means to a different perception of the world. The soul is non-verbal essentially, and so naturally does not yield to a verbal description as easily as the mind. But it functions nevertheless between the human parts; and in

the ego, the soul expresses itself in images, elements and emotions. Seemingly unbound by time or words, the soul fills the "space" of one's ego with the elements of one's being in symbolic form.

Because mind and soul operate outside of the ego and show such distinct characteristics at times, it is easy for the ego to personify or objectify these functions; and using one function, an attempt is made to describe or picture the other. Actually, these functions are only expressions, instruments, channels, and catalysts between the parts. Operating in these ways between the parts, the mind and soul may actively assert themselves, for example, into the ego or psyche with substance to be dealt with. Or operating as undirected forces, the mind and soul may move through the human parts nevertheless in their necessary dynamic expression.

We might recognize these descriptions from popular religious usage and associate certain characteristics with them. For instance, we are so consciously aware of the mind function that we might associate ego with mind and delegate the lesser known soul with the psyche. But this bias seems unnecessary, though common, in religious experience. A verbal dominance in our functioning or the ego's exploitation of the mind does not mean the soul is absent. But it may suggest that the suppressed soul and the suppressed psyche find expression in symbols and images which

are not easily understood by a language-dominated consciousness. And whereas the ego may more easily manipulate the elements of language and discern reality more easily in structured, controllable forms, the valuing of such activities may even short-change the soul of its elemental expression, resulting in some dangerous alternatives for the soul's dynamic existence to continue. Interesting, though less common, the dominance of the soul's function over the mind's can also be seen or experienced by some people. So from general experience and with some arbitrariness, one might acknowledge common prejudices and still assert that mind and soul can function equally and fully between and within both ego and psyche. And we are limited in these identifications both by the unknown essences of these parts and functions and by the undescribable limits of their existence.

## 2. HUMAN EXPERIENCES

Whereby we can posit consciousness and functions by the type and movement of elemental material we deal with, we don't actually say we experience the conscious plane of our existence. On this plane, or its parts, the ego, and the psyche, are our bases for perceptions; but only through the interpretation of our mind/soul functions may we experience a certain power or feeling related to consciousness.

Even reliance on Jung can lead to confusion at this point. For Jung includes our spiritual ferment and essence within the unknown of the psyche, so that the psyche includes "the totality of existence outside of consciousness, surrounding and carrying the conscious ego."<sup>8</sup> I limit the psyche to be the unconscious counterpart to the conscious ego. And as for this spiritual essence or center of life-force? It seems to be closest associated with the human "libido" in accord with Jung's description: "the sum total of the energetic life processes, of all the vital forces we experience."<sup>9</sup> We can easily sense how these life-forces empower indiscriminately that which needs or yields to it, providing the dynamism for our mind and soul functions and motivating the activity of our conscious and unconscious parts.

As the foundation to our actual living, the libido can be called the human spirit in its purest sense; and it is counterpart to the Spirit of God perceived beyond us. To clarify this association of human (libido) spirit and divine (God) spirit, consider its analogy to the ego's and psyche's relationship. The ego is not the psyche; and whereas the psyche may be limitless in scope and depth, the ego has boundaries at points of the unknown. Yet both

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. xx.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. xxi.

parts are related in the functions of "knowing," communication can occur, and one is as the other. While elements, effects, and expressions differ, both parts share a common identity with consciousness and knowing. Now the same can be said of the human spirit being as the divine. Both are related to the life-force, experience of being, although the human spirit has boundaries at points of no life-force (death). Even the elements, effects, and expression may differ between the divine and human spirit; but communion still occurs! In this sense, the libido can be seen as the source for being "in the image of God" even while the libido is distinctly human and individually involved with related to the ego and psyche of a particular individual. If a point of contact is realized between the libido and God in experience, the result is communion, not union.<sup>10</sup> And considering now this spiritual (that is, life-force) plane, these two parts of human experience are also related by the same mind and soul functions.

Through the mind function, Spirit is often described as the embodiment of Truth, the power of the Word, the essence of the Law, the Voice of God being heard, the Way of life to follow. Through the soul function, Spirit may be imaged in the natural world as a presence like wind, fire, storm, ocean calm. While some cultures associate a

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<sup>10</sup>Harkness, pp. 20-24.

father's authority with the Spirit verbalized, they also use the image of a mother or nurturing female or brooding bird over her eggs to depict the creative, sensual, loving, unstructured aspect of Spirit. Spirit becomes associated with mother earth, the ocean, the state of two lovers, and both life and death.<sup>11</sup> If the mind and soul functions are operating in a balanced and healthy fashion, the elements of the Spirit develop in a dynamic and varied way that escapes description.

To clarify now the spiritual plane of human existence, there is no life-experience at all without spirituality, development and relationship of libido with God. The human spirit or libido is experienced primarily through the mind and soul functions and as both the very center of one's being and as in communion with the divine beyond. The divine spirit or God (in part) is experienced much as Otto<sup>12</sup> describes, as numinous/holy. The transcendent beyond both space and time is experienced within time and space as terrifying and fascinating, as both love and power. If one is consciously unaware of these experiences, it does not mean they aren't occurring; for the libido has some autonomy to influence us unconsciously. And if we consciously resist or suppress such experiences or parts of our beings, the Spirit

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<sup>11</sup>For a thorough summary of cultural associations with the Holy Spirit, see Dow Kirkpatrick, The Holy Spirit (Nashville: Tidings, 1974).

<sup>12</sup>Rudolf Otto, The Idea of the Holy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1943).

can seem to be thwarted or "deadened"; as it sometimes depends upon the adaptation and participation of the ego for its relative freedom to empower, enthuse, inspire. Just as the ego and psyche are both independent and dependent to some degree, so likewise are God and the libido within human experiences.

Such understandings are obviously limited within a single person's perspective and in no way go so far as to describe essences nor extents of the human or divine spirit parts nor the mind and soul functions. Leave it said, however, that the human and divine spirit does not seem contained by individual space and time as the conscious and unconscious human parts. So while the human functions may channel elements or intents between the spiritual and conscious parts of our make-up, these autonomous parts may or may not be influenced.

In this simple scheme, we have four parts to individual human existence related by two functions (see Appendix I). Attention can be focused upon any one part or either functional dimension, i.e., upon conscious awareness, unconscious processes, "soul-seeking" (experimenting with the libido), or "God-seeking" (experimenting with the divine sense). Now if we ask the next question about the reality of these parts beyond verbal concepts and imagination, we may proceed to those experiences (still)

where a reality seems to exist beyond our individuality and which influences us from beyond.

### 3. REALITIES BEYOND, KNOWN WITHIN

Just as we do not know the back-reaches or limits of our psyche, so we cannot always sense the limits of the divine impulse within us. Yet from both individual experience and reason, informed and reinforced by communal tradition and scripture, we know also of God beyond us. Out of need, we may seek and confess this greater reality; out of confrontation, we may find ourselves in relationship. Especially in light of the concern of this project, we must reflect on the significance of this God for human spiritual need. It is my own observation at this point that some spiritual need may result simply from internal imbalance of human functioning and perhaps over-dominance of one part. But since it is assumed that every human part is inter-dependent to some extent, it also appears that no inner source or principle can be relied upon for original input or constant guidance. Is God the source of our life and the constant principle of being? Again, accepting the universal human tendency to go beyond where one is, the God beyond must be considered ultimately for our possible fulfillment.

As Jung has pointed out,<sup>13</sup> a collective understanding of God, Will and Spirit or Logos and Eros, has

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<sup>13</sup>Jung, p. 28.



functioned within people consistently at all times and in all places to yield certain common expressions of that which is beyond us and yet addresses us--"God." These expressions are founded upon a consensusomnium--moral, aesthetic, and religious values--as collective ideals which somehow retain their feeling-value as well. Of course, cultures then place value upon these expressions and interpret them accordingly, and the following is simply my own Western, Judeo-Christian view of God. Such a view leads us to ask "what has been revealed to us about God?"

First we have the Old Testament testimony of God's activity. God practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth; and we may understand and know God this way, and so glory in it! (Jer. 9:23-24) To know God is to know the difference between good and evil, truth and falsehood (Jer. 4:22). Finally, we know God as the One who knows us (Ps. ~~137:1-12~~ 137:1-12) and whose presence is everywhere. We have the sense of being identified, so that our movement towards individual wholeness occurs not only subjectively within us, but is influenced by what is beyond, which identifies us within. These are positive expressions of a God one ultimately can trust to affirm, even while God's universal perspective may oppose or destroy our own limited preferences. This God is the fulfillment of love and power united, the source of truth and vitality, a reality always present in the world, effective in history

and lives, but beyond our limited consciousness, narrow horizons, or personal desires.

How could such expressions about God be confidently made if God existed beyond our limits? From the first chapter of Genesis, the Spirit of God was there bringing about the creation and the Word, and to chosen individuals, the Spirit made known God's will and God's power.

These special individuals mediated between their God vision and the people. Generally, the people knew this God through their inspired leaders/prophets, and the Spirit of God was either objectively associated with events of God-in-history or perceived in ecstatic, various effects of an unpredictable nature. Despite the seeming consistent assurance of God's Law throughout the testament, God's basic nature expressed in Spirit could still be subtly peaceful, volatile, comforting, disrupting, creative, destructive, vivifying, violating, etc. God's law could be final judgment or righteous approval to a people who were ambivalent about God's nature and their standing before God, trusting mostly in their historical interpretation of God's action, their leaders' witness to a covenant, and their personally developed relationship, if any.

Then a significant interpretation of history occurred, when God initiated a new relationship with people by revealing a loving-powerful nature within the human life of Jesus. And the Spirit was associated with

this man so intimately, that not only was God believed to be in the flesh (incarnate) but the true Word and the true Spirit became vulnerable and exposed within a human context, to be trusted and available to all. Jesus' works, teaching, and self-giving to death were all consistent witness to the true nature of God now revealed directly to every sort of person without his/her diserving it.

To such a powerful interpretation the early followers gave their lives in daily experiences. Their response was to proclaim Jesus the Christ, the way of life or salvation; and since the resurrection-news of Christ's indestructible life, this living symbol has continued to exist through history. Most significant, however, for this project's interests, Christ was not allowed to become totally divine nor totally human; and likewise, Jesus Christ was believed to be continually present in human existence through the Holy Spirit, as our "means of salvation." Means of salvation today is none other than the integration of self and communion with Other desired out of our spiritual need for a fuller life.

It is not for me to say whether Jesus Christ is the only real symbol of the integration or communion needed to trust and relate to the God I affirm; but I personally know of no other reality that serves in his place nor accomplishes the same thing in a concrete, historical Word and Symbol. What is accomplished? God's true nature was

revealed in the life of Jesus. Realized in a human context, God's nature became accessible to us. Following Jesus' way, we can know ourselves and God in a new integration of the human and divine.

Remembering our earlier descriptions of the human and divine parts within our beings and of the conscious and unconscious, we might note that nothing about our functions of mind and spirit would necessarily unite or integrate our parts into any whole Self or around any center of Being. As will be analyzed in subsequent chapters, just the very opposite can happen, with fragmentation of our parts and malfunctioning of our mind and soul. Looking beyond the troubles within us, the same sort of disturbances can occur between people and any sort of reality rather than the integrative unity idealized.

In response to this turmoil and likely destructiveness, the figure of Jesus Christ unites human and divine, conscious and unconscious, power and love, within human existence. Trusting his teaching and accepting his life way, we now affirm a God who initiated Grace for our sake and gave of Self in an act of power beyond time/space, life/death.

How is this affected? Scripturally, we can listen to John 14:1-27:

Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me. . . . The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all

things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled. Neither let it be afraid.

In my own conception, the Holy Spirit is like the Mind and Soul of God, not so much a "thing" but a dynamic function; or like the very functions relating us with God and ourselves, the Spirit brings the presence of God into common experience. Through Jesus Christ, communion is possible between the two distinct realities (parts) of ourselves and God, with the mind/soul functions of the Holy Spirit communicating, catalyzing, influencing both ways between human and divine, within and without our individual existence.

With this perspective, we can describe such phrases as "In Christ; Christ in us" as the integrative activity necessary for our functional centers to be maintained and for a healthful maturity to be realized. We can even speculate that the image of God in us might be the analogy of our inner relationships of ego-functions-psyche with our external relationships of self-functions-others. But this goes beyond the limits of what we may both think and experience. Further conjecturing and reasoning may be interesting but no longer serves our purpose of reflection. If our project's main focus is spiritual need and our authentic responses, we must accept personal experiences and individual perceptions as our main elements to

work with. Now what remains is to relate this to our specific situation of need, pain, and community.

#### 4. SPIRITUAL NEED WITHIN THIS CONTEXT

In this reflection, our inner human state has been schematized and the reality of God beyond has been affirmed. Jesus Christ has been proposed as the symbol and way of both realizing ourselves and others and relating in communion with God. The missing subject is community, and the absent element is the Spirit's very vitality in relationships. Neither we nor God are static or isolated. Nor are we passive in our living. If we sense a spiritual need and know this magnified by the pain of a changing world, it is within relationships and community that we must experience our personal realizations and fulfillment with God.

So, it is a pure consequence to this reflection that we must now discern our various ways of living with ourselves and others. Just as reflection is an intentional ministerial response to human need, so is discernment before activity. Jesus asked James and John, "Do you know what you are asking for?" The minister may now ask, "What are people asking for?" Only then can we make any valid active response from our personal resources to another's situation.

## CHAPTER III

## DISCERNMENT OF RELATIONSHIPS

When we turn from inner reflection to discernment of daily, human activities, questions may arise like:

"On what level do most people operate in their daily lives?"

"Do people need to know themselves or others in order to live fully?"

"What distinguishes spiritual relationships from non-spiritual ones?"

"What way of relating is most fulfilling or healthy?"

No simple or immediate answers can be given, for the desire to schematize human relationships leads to complex considerations and one major limitation. If humanity is comprised of many parts and functions through symbolic imagery as well as verbal processes, then a conscious attempt to analyze what is a "moving target" can never be complete. Still, it is the ego's purpose, in part, to search out, sort, and decide ways of adapting to the world. And, the ego plays a special role influencing the growth and direction within the individual. So affirming both the limits and the possibilities of this conscious approach, I might simply proceed with my observations. These general observations then give us a structured human context within which one person might respond to another's concern.

In my own attempt to schematicize adaptations, I have generalized four common ways of living: circumstantial

manipulation, responsiveness, participation, and belonging. All four ways can be described in psychological, social, or theological terms. All four have advantages for survival in this world, as well as risks which lead to destruction. All four yield distinct views of the world and self and are separate from each other by the bounds of particular conflicts. That is, a change from one way to another seems to occur only through conflict (dying and new living), not through either the mind's insight or the soul's awakening. These four ways rest in one's own conscious adaptations, not in the pure functions nor in the primal, elemental unconscious nor in the life-force Spirit nor in the God or people beyond oneself. To image our life-situation and the basis of these "ways," we might place in four corners the dynamic states of conscious-ego, psyche, God-spirit, libido-spirit; with the self's functions of mind and soul in the center of the tensions and the self's activities. Then beginning with the "world adapter"--the ego--we may consider each adaptation to a need or basic concern of life.

## 1. MANIPULATION

If survival is the goal for living, the easiest and simplest ego-adaptation to the world is to work with what one knows already and control the unknown with a dominant function. For many of our culture, this means exclusive



living in the conscious realm with a dominant mind function guarding the boundaries. Without needing to understand or acknowledge anything about oneself or others, one can adapt and operate based upon "what works" and "what doesn't work." More so, that which is valued positively can be exploited by cause-and-effect means and that which is perceived as dangerous, frightening, or useless can be avoided or suppressed.

Manipulation, at base, is the ego's perception of reality in objective terms; "things" exist and "things" can be handled. Here first are the advantages of ego-control through the mind's functioning: 1) rewards can be earned, 2) life-direction can be discerned, 3) dangerous extremes can be limited, and 4) failure can be rationalized or denied.

Young children begin adapting in this manipulative way. Watch any child long enough and you will see that her random movements are often related to some past movement associated with a reward.<sup>1</sup> Conditioning can be understood not only as how the environment influences us, but also as how we might try to influence the environment, using superstitious rituals that once "worked." Trial and error will eventually lead to conclusions about nature's laws or steps to maturity, giving us a direction toward a goal or away from the undesirable. And by feeding the ego

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<sup>1</sup>Jerome S. Bruner, et al., Studies in Cognitive Development (New York: Wiley, 1967), pp. 12-29.

strictly with verbal, rational, objectified perceptions of the mind, the clever person can know how s/he responds to situations and how life-forces influence the self without ever understanding why it occurs or what is involved. By manipulating one's circumstances, one can seem to grow, develop, adapt, or succeed, with no real self-understanding and no real inner balance.

Disregarding the consequences of this blindness for a moment, we may assume that this adaption will maintain some kind of balance just for sustained ease of living. So considering the most constructive effort of the soul function, for instance, the soul may seek its expression through the mind, reducing its impulses to manipulation too. So one "feels" the necessity to rationally decide one's steps on "life's pathway," to experiment and test one's set of rules/laws for their expediency, and to perceive all relationships as "I-it." Even God may be seen solely as determiner of our circumstances or as the object to be manipulated. As manipulator, par excellence, God bears upon our living with his Will, bringing fortune, weather, material and human wealth, giving us trials or blessings to be handled by us appropriately. As the object of our manipulations, God is reduced to the object of our pagan, superstitious rites. Or in its finest state, this view is simply a church "orthodoxy"--where support of doctrine makes you a Christian. Zahrnt observes, "Consequently it

is no accident that orthodoxy has always been characterized by a notable lack of love."<sup>2</sup> Again stated with this approach, no understanding of God or self is really desired or considered necessary. Instead, the central question centers upon one's own power and the approach, "if X exists, what does it do?"

Since the self system can eventually become off-balance, the risks to this way are as easy to see as are the advantages. Consider the effects of the mind's limitations in perceiving life, the isolation of our human parts, the negation of realities, and the fragmentation of resources. First our mind is likely to miss human possibilities in its verbal conclusions, confined to the realities of facts and blind to the realm of imagery and forces beyond verbal containment or memory's program. Second, the mind must either be employed to constantly interpret the unknown into reasonable forms or to declare war upon that which it cannot control. One result of this lack of communication is the soul's isolation, or in folklore, we feel "starved," or dead (distinct from dying). Third, desperate needs come from deprivation of other parts' expression or caring for that side of us which is creative, emotional, nurturing, imaginative. From this suppression comes the negation of the soul, or the "soul's

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<sup>2</sup>Heinz Zahrnt, p. 74.

damnation." Here for the soul's very survival and expression of the human spirit, what the soul generates in our psyches could be called "evil," or destructive. The risks are even greater than this, since this manipulation manifests itself in other ways than through our mind's functioning. More unusually, some people allow their spirit-libido to express itself only through the soul's functioning, and they abuse, negate, exploit, or fragment their mind.

Dominance of either function seems based upon our tendency to live by the simplest means at hand, and then to exploit this means in an attempt to save or preserve one's life in some form. Disregarding the destructiveness of this way, people either rationally create a world of their own preference or spiritually impose their individual realm upon reality.

Only the conflict with a more complex reality can seem to break this way's hold upon the person's ego. Only the upheaval of dying in one's constructed world of preservation can break the hold of the dominating function and swing the self back to a balance through understanding.

Why does it take an upheaval? Wouldn't change come much easier with reinforcement of a better faith? Dr. Martin Marty depicts our wish and the answer by saying:

People /of faith/ say 'we were nice people and now we're getting nicer. We liked people and now we like longer, more durably. We were getting along all right, Christ comes in our lives to help us get along a little all-righter.' But with Christ, what we were clinging

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to, we can't any longer. What had been old securities must be supplanted. Continuities between old life and new are broken.<sup>3</sup>

A crisis comes when one's world begins to break apart and one sees its purely human construction. This severe judgment of self can break the ego's claim to control and bring the soul's awakening or the mind's insights. This moment is sometimes known as grace, for that which did not even seem to exist comes from "nowhere" in fully developed form to give one's self a new life and to fill one's void with a renewed spirit. Thus described individually, the same thing can occur in relationship with others, proving the same dimension in human experience and baffling the mind's comprehension just as much. And now theologically, we may recognize this moment as the crisis of unconfessed sin and doubt. When we finally "lose our own life" in humble confession before the true God, we discover, not a divine manipulator's response, but God's forgiveness and our justification. Being justified, we can begin to trust the unknown and to accept our limits through a new responsiveness.

## 2. RESPONSIVENESS

This is the second way of adapting to one's self and the world. This way of responsiveness means that the

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<sup>3</sup>Taken from an address by Dr. Martin Marty, "Reconciliation," Layman's Leadership Institute, Nov., 1975, Scottsdale, Arizona.

ego listens and seeks to understand the natures and expressions of human make-up, social parties, and God in presence. The need to understand leads to a cultivated ability to respond. Individually, this is represented by "integrity"; socially, we speak of "sensitive" or "caring" people; theologically the natural impulse to God would be important and forms of discourse or presence explored. Just as the manipulative approach sought control, so the responsive approach seeks balance.

Inner balance is partly kept by learning to give and to receive. An act of giving means recognizing another reality beyond one's conscious self, knowing oneself enough to "give up" final claims, extending beyond oneself in intent towards another, and expressing something of one's value and contribution. An act of receiving also involves recognizing another reality beyond one's conscious part, knowing oneself enough to sense an openness/need, opening oneself to the intent of another, and accepting the other's expression.

The advantage of such a way is that the human spirit or life-force comes to express itself in a greater variety of forms, yielding the sense of one being life-filled. The ego's surrender of power puts more of life's stress and experience into one's center and strongest place--both mind and soul functions. The unconscious ceases to be so frightening and destructive when it is understood through the

soul as an inner world of symbol and decision. God becomes known in relationship through personal experience, rather than as some impersonal influence. And a mutual respect of functions often results in self-caring for the first time, with concern that not only the mind develops but that the soul also achieves health.

But here also there is a problem. No matter if the mind tries to "experience" by affirming the soul's existence, the mind still perceives in linguistic, linear order. So objectively, the mind might ask, "How does the soul develop?" assuming that its own linear development might apply to the soul. And no matter how the soul may "reflect" through the creative use of the mind's tools, the soul might still yearn to "free the mind" of its very characteristics. Mutual understanding is limited through these functions; and adaptation in this way more commonly remains at the level of accommodation--all things "separate but equal." And so, within ourselves, the ego plays the role of arbitrator, coach, referee, responsibly encouraging all functions to exist side by side. Of course, like two teams up for a well-matched game, the result can be exciting or it can lead to confusion and the extremes of expression.

To passively accept oneself, others, or even God is a poor adaptation to maintain for very long in this world. For we are an active and feeling people. Integrity in action comes when we know a mutuality or reconciliation

in our activities as well as intent. Again, a shift in the ego's role is necessary.

### 3. PARTICIPATION

In both of the ways so far described, the ego has objectified the inner mind and soul functions to some extent. Just as a person may walk over hard ground or even soft sand, so the ego appears to be walking over these functions or making its path between. For the way of Participation, however, the ego takes on a different role which is like jumping into the river rather than coaching from the shore. The ego accepts participation in the midst of the self's different parts, by letting go of its superior status and contributing the power of limitation and judgment. The ego maintains its identity to adapt, decide, sort, and examine incoming and outgoing information; the different parts move together in a common intent; and participation takes place when the self is directed beyond itself. The mind and soul move as catalysts and instruments between the parts, allowing the libido to bring the depths of feelings, images, energy, and direction up through the unconscious, suited for the environment by the ego, and enlightened throughout by the Spirit of God from beyond. These concepts only point to the many factors that participate in a way that is involved in some form of action. Much as the body coordinates many factors in the



smooth movement of a dance, so the self is coordinated in the way of participation to appear both simple and deliberate in movement. Just as the dance is important in itself, so this activity is done for its own sake.

For an example of participation as distinct from responsiveness, let's take the crisis situation of a death. A person in grief experiences both the rational appropriateness of silence and social strength and the grief-feelings of sadness and anger in response to the death. In responsiveness, the person's ego operates on the compunction of listening and responding to the self's parts and so respects both natural expressions of mind and soul, determining when one function shall dominate and when another shall. We see this occur when the person is silent and emotionless and yet says that he feels great loss. Or when the person expresses a flood of feeling while protesting that he really isn't this way all of the time and he only needs a release once in a while or the situation is unusual, etc. (the dominant mind does not entirely retire). The ego tries to direct the functions which remain basically dualistic though aware. Also, such maintenance by the ego requires that the person's focus remains upon himself much of the time, not relaxed enough to openly give or focus upon another.

Now, in contrast, participation means that the expressions are much more complex and not so orderly, with

the dominant function neither suppressing the other nor fully retiring. A balance exists as all parts move together. So in this crisis, the feelings and thoughts of spirit and psyche are freed to work in the present moment. Thoughts are expressed even while tears flow or the body trembles; and feelings are expressed with the help of words. The ego may be an instrument for the deepest movements of the spirit by also serving as a catalyst between the many human parts involved together in the situation. In this way, the full resources of the self are employed and any dominant tendencies have both checks from the ego and checks from the outside situation.

The accompanying view of the world is also one of participation. And here, humanistic values of process and individual worth are important. This way seems to be the ultimate goal of "sensitivity training"--where each person's contribution is valued and the experience of working together is prized.

A real disadvantage of this way comes when the truth doesn't even matter as long as everyone participates and no one is slighted. Sometimes the meaning of a "participating act" is vague or unconscious, if any meaning exists beyond the value of the experience itself. Sometimes, in the hardest moments of life, the resources of the various parts fail and with meaning lacking, all is lost. For in everything said, nothing has been said of any commitment either

within or without that serves as priorities in a transcendent sense. Of course functional values have existed in all of the three ways thus described. But consider the distinction between functional and transcendent values and the role of the transcendent in the most crucial times of our existence.

The way of participation works best with functional values within the individual. Given a personal fact in our lives which is painful, distasteful, or destructive, how do we deal with it? Four abilities can be employed with three outcomes resulting from their exercise. First, our ability to feel deeply gives a fact importance in our life to justify the effort of placing it. Second, there is the ability to reflect, which brings recognition of the fact. Third, the ability to integrate many factors and dimensions then provides a system for placement of the difficult concern. Finally, the ability to interpret priorities enables our decision. These functional abilities correspond with our functional values for daily living. Without these abilities, an inability to feel may numb us and silence our natural alarm in trouble to apply all of our resources then. Our decision may be made more by circumstances and dominant tendencies than by any real application of ourselves. Or, if we are unable to reflect and thus recognize our inner tendencies and forces as well as the outer ones bearing upon our decision, then all of these forces are

endowed with extra power by the self-denial. They are free to move behind the dark curtain of the unconscious and to move easily about in the situation in scant disguises, relying upon the mind's inability to recognize what is incongruent, nonverbal, or disturbing. Recognition, thus, immediately sheds light upon the confusion or darkness and reduces the power of any factor involved, within or without.

Even if we recognize a destructive desire, we may yet have no place for it to rest in our human framework. Then this desire may actually gain from recognition. Being singled out and held in its own special category, the desire's existence requires certain energy constantly to "keep sight of it", and it takes a dominant place in any act of participation endeavored. Unresolved, the problem demands in its glaring presence or is suppressed (out of consciousness) with the price of human energy.

So these abilities are important to our participation with not only facts, but relationships. These same abilities are also limited in scope, and such is our human situation that all within us may fail us at crucial times. Lacking self-sufficiency in our sustained, worldly, participation, we come to moments when meaning beyond ourselves must give us reason for being.

For only one example, it is possible that a person's own basic spirit to live might not only be suppressed, but twisted by some experience and be manifested instead in an inner power to destroy self. What then assures that recognition, interpretation, and placement will in any way alter or subdue one's own fundamental expression, if all reason suggests destruction and all feelings express hopelessness? This question is sometimes put in terms of the difference between knowing something and willing something to be otherwise. And what meaning does "participation-for-its-own-sake" now have? If one's own basic impulse and circumstances give ample cause for self-destruction, who is the self itself to say in the present moment, "be still", "be otherwise"? Such a statement comes at this time not from self knowledge, but from the perspective of another standing independent of one's self and with whom the self can identify and trust completely.

This life and death question leads one to seek an outside perspective because this problem goes far beyond one's own abilities to save oneself or any functional values for survival. Only transcendent values give meaning for continued relationship beyond oneself with others and the world. These values may be conveyed in many believable forms, but they are all received when the person accepts his own inabilities and looks beyond. Is there anything ultimate to

identify with and trust, as Tillich affirms?<sup>4</sup> Is there a "dying into life"?<sup>5</sup>

Since in such a process of dying even the spirit to seek may be depleted, the human experience is sometimes that of being found. Whether such meaning comes through another person, an insight, a vision or hope, let us simply speak of God, as the independent meaning for our existence. Because God (in some form) exists with initiative and higher purpose, the person is "found" and able to identify with God's purpose. Only then can the person, representing God of greater being, "Place" his self-destruction in a powerless position in God's greater perspective, despite its present monopoly over the individual. Life continues and participation acquires significance because there is meaning to life by God's standards.

From this unusual situation, we can draw the distinctions between participation and the final way of relating--"belonging." Whereas the projected theology of participation might tend to be idealistic, pietistic, and individualized; a crisis of meaning--again at human limits--brings the revealed God significantly into one's personal life and community. That is, incarnation and the Christ-symbol can be one expression of this new life of meaning.

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<sup>4</sup>Paul Tillich, Dynamics of Faith (New York: Harper & Row, 1957).

<sup>5</sup>Pierce Johnson, Dying Into Life (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972) gives one interpretation of this concept in connection with various historic life styles.

Yet another way to affirm this is to say that God's love has become known through some sort of incorporation. This leads to the way of belonging.

#### 4. BELONGING

A simple definition of the word "belong" tells us,

To have a proper or suitable place; to have the proper qualities to be: as, she belongs in the movies.  
 "belong to" 1. to be part of; be related to or connected with. 2. to be owned by. 3. to be a member of.<sup>6</sup>

Why is this word applied to us? Because, like the man in crisis, we move from functional values in adapting to transcendent ones. Rather than ask "Where do I place this or that in my life?" we come to ask "Where am I placed in this life I know?" More than objects, we aren't manipulated into some niche. Instead, we seek to have the "proper qualities to be," to exist as we are, where we are, how we are. From the above definition we may see that belonging is really a state; and this state is then related by prepositions like: "belonging in," "belonging to," "belonging with," "belonging as." Let us first consider the state itself.

The state of belonging is being "at home" in the midst of one's polarities and forces. It is a sense of peace in the midst of tension. An acceptance of life's

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<sup>6</sup>Webster's New World Dictionary (Cleveland: World, 1966), p. 136.

paradoxes, without any easy complacency or lackadaisical apathy. Where each way before this way had a bias towards one part or another of the self, belonging is the mature balance of the self with others in the world. For example, participation means a give and take without a commitment beyond any one individual part of self. Belonging is yet a more complete integration because meaning is the key element that distinguishes belonging from the other ways. Of course, meaning that comes to a person still manipulative or self-sufficient will not work like some "magic" to change his ways. To this person's ways, even meaning can have the force of an overwhelming and dominant factor which can actually suppress growth or health and destroy one's self. And meaning can be used to manipulate circumstances or mediate responsibility or play out some act of participation without any role beyond that of another functional value. So belonging is not obtained even if meaning is a factor in one's life. But belonging is not possible without meaning, that which balances the movement of one's individual human spirit in one's individual moment of time/space.

Is this a contrived balance? No, that's the way of manipulation. Is this a passive balance? No, that's the way of responsiveness. Is this a cyclical balance, dynamic within itself (like a gyroscope)? No, that's the way of participation. Belonging points to a dynamic balance or



spiral that is set in direction by commitment to meaning. To belong means commitment, unavoidably, in a place and time. So all manipulation, responsiveness, and participation are centered upon meaning that places us in reality. Such a state of belonging can continue only when one is grounded upon that which is eternally true or ultimate, sustained by self-knowledge, and enlivened by relationships with others.

Just as God is and first initiates out of love towards us, so this way of belonging confronts us--to be accepted or denied. We can choose to affirm our particular existence, accept the state of realities about us, and be in relationship to the grace of transcendent meaning. It is a matter of living as fully as possible in the midst of the unknown, unattainable, unavoidable, and unrelenting. Or we can deny this way--saying "I am only what I am consciously" and employing negation, division, withdrawal as survival means. But what, in fact, is being denied? It is the point of contact between the state of belonging and hard realities.

We are to belong in this world, to our God, with our "neighbors," and as our Lord (Christ). In this world, we are vulnerable by taking it seriously and engaging in it. Obviously any peace we would know "at home" would not be of this world! Belonging to God is affirming one's full commitment to a special relationship or allegiance. Only if

we reduced ourselves to objects in a manipulative way could we conceive of this as being owned! Belonging with our neighbors makes our place on an equal (not superior or inferior) standing with each other. This enables the I-thou relationships to develop for mutual fulfillment.

Finally, belonging as our Lord combines the two important notions of discipleship and Lordship in our experience (not in a comprehensive doctrine). Given that our ego is as our psyche and our libido is as the divine, still it is clear that ego-libido might hear the calls and follow the authority of the psyche-divine. There is some similarity here to our being as Christ; and yet also like disciples, we recognize His call and follow our Lord.<sup>7</sup>

Since this way of belonging is characterized more by a circle in motion than a linear path, it is checked by many elements of living rather than by progressive achievements or steps. "Belonging," by definition, goes beyond any analysis or argument, pro or con. Yet given the type of human existence needed for full relationship in our present world situation, this way seems most desirable to the seeker, most reconciling to the alienated, and most empowering to the weak--to somehow belong.

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<sup>7</sup>See Eduard Schweizer, Lordship and Discipleship (Naperville, Ill.: Allenson, 1960), for a full description of these concepts.

## CHAPTER IV

## RESPONSIBILITY TO ENGAGE

Assuming an initial concern to minister exists, to see a spiritual need is to be drawn into personal reflection. Personal reflection has no relationship to others until there is discernment of one's own and others' ways of living. Now, when an individual approaches me with a life-concern, my first responsible action shall be to listen and share responsively, not to prescribe a book or organize a program. Understanding the concern may be sufficient engagement in itself; but if openness exists for more, then a means of participating might follow. A minister has not only counseling skills to offer, but the rich resources of a religion's myths, traditions, and mutual exercises to draw upon. For the mind-dominated person, encouraged awareness of his own feelings, others' sensitivities, and the Spirit's presence could give this person greater balance and sense of new life. For the soul-dominated person, studies of God's Word in various forms and philosophies could also bring balance and guidance. Each individual must simply be attributed the dignity and worth s/he deserves; and only to the degree that s/he shares and seeks will determine the ministerial degree of response.

From this project, I have drawn enough conclusions to influence every aspect of my ministry, including the

substance and approach of preaching. How could I, with any conscience, seek to manipulate the congregation after discerning ways of adapting? Responsiveness at least encourages me to face and describe realities for what they are. After recognizing our various dealings with these realities, only then would the introduction of meaning and our place in this world have constructive influence upon our integrity. A sample sermon follows only as an example of this "approach"--first reality, our participation, and then meaning with consequence.

#### THE SPIRITUAL QUEST OF THE '70'S ROM. 5:1-5

In a book called Religion in American Life, written in 1965, Dr. Martin Marty quotes Paul Tillich as saying "the word 'spirit' seems to be disappearing from our vocabulary," and "the word 'spiritual' is lost beyond retrieval."

If this is so, then I am foolish to use an antiquated word in preaching on the SPIRITUAL QUEST OF THE '70'S.

But my topic really has four presuppositions:

- 1) the question of meaning is still open
- 2) there is a major spiritual quest going on today
- 3) there is something spiritual to be found
- 4) a real response is needed from each of us to this quest for meaning and experience.

So first let's remember the '60's and why meaning is still an open question.

It was declared in the '60's that the world had decided upon a secular meaning for its existence, and Christianity must adapt accordingly. Among other values, we sought out injustices and through Olympian reason, high virtue (and a sprinkling of psychic powers), we strove to establish a new world for our future. Through psychology and willfulness, we made a valiant effort to sensitize, condition, affirm, to justify ourselves in

our own sight, seeking sustenance for our work in our existential designs alone. Many of us felt the urgent necessity and impatience to complete our work, resolve problems, to produce more, as fast as possible.

Yet, as Bishop Earl Hunt, Jr. observes,

The current withdrawal syndrome of the people has developed before the urgent business of the 60's could yet be completed. The race problem is not yet solved. Human conscience has not yet overcome the thirst for war. The integrity of industry and government in providing for fundamental human needs is not yet assured. But the overwhelming storms of religious protest have deteriorated into gentle breezes.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the great pronouncements and high idealism of the 60's, we must still ask today, "Have we really made up our minds for the meaning of our existence? Is secularity really established as our final answer?

Dr. Martin Marty, in an address in 1973 on Meaning and Belonging, shows how few people have actually made up their minds. Among his examples he states:

Americans are perceived as amiable, Godless people, 96% of whom tell the pollsters that they believe in God.

We are the first secular society whose constitution is silent about a covenant and divine powers, yet 80% tell pollsters that they resent the removal of prayer from schools and public institutions.

Academic communities are made up of faculty whose lifestyle is ordinarily empirical, skeptical, and agnostic, and whose student bodies crowd as never before the religion departments where questions of meaning are pursued.

Life magazine in a secular world dies and Billy Graham's decision reaches the 4 million mark.

First novels languish and honest Kate Miller sells a million, Hal Lindsey sells 2 million.

Has our secular society made up its mind about meaning, or is there not a desperate search for it, for many in form of a spiritual quest?

When "religious movements" are discerned as issues by leading publications, and when our

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<sup>8</sup>Earl G. Hunt, Jr., Storms and Starlight (Nashville: Tidings, 1974).

established religious institutions are finally taking spirituality serious enough to include curriculum, or our bishops choose it as our theme for 1976 and major themes for conferences--especially when a people consistently show a "hunger and thirst" for experience of a life principle beyond the material, then we must assert a spiritual interest.

Next ask, "What makes this a quest, a movement, rather than a study or fad or concept to be argued?"

Of course by the very definition of Spirit we know that words cannot capture the essence of this reality, and experience, not theory is the goal.

As R. D. Lange, the psychoanalyst, is much quoted to have said:

We do not seek a theory of experience, but we seek again the experience that gives rise to theory.

Looking for human motivation to quest, we can see several factors:

- 1) Our youth have been marked as in rebellion to the religions of their parents. Yet as Margaret Mead has said, "they are forced to create a mish-mosh of all the religions that ever were because their parents so ineffectively passed on to them systems of meaning in living traditions."
- 2) Also today, we have cafeteria-assortment of options, and there is that Bantu saying, "He who never visits thinks mother is the only cook."
- 3) Beyond this spirituality (devoid of God) and curiosity, there are also those who reflect naturally on life and death realities. But then, this isn't likely to generate a quest as not everyone feels the press or value of meaning in their daily survival or attempt to be comfortable. Only some are sensitive to meaning, while everyone is aware of it intellectually. This was brought home to me by a New Yorker cartoon, which shows a rather large, prepossessing woman and her slight, bald, hen-pecky looking husband standing at the edge of the grand canyon, and she turns to him as they survey the canyon and she says, "Makes you feel very insignificant, doesn't it?"
- 4) Actually, I see a larger, fourth factor in our culture that motivates us to quest and which has touched all, young/old, thinkers, actors.

It is a common, contemporary Western lifestyle associated with rapid change, industry, materialism, power. The best description of this lifestyle I have yet found is in a book written by two cardiologists, Drs. Friedman and Rosenman, called Type A Behavior and Your Heart,<sup>9</sup> and these writers, who present the high correlation of heart disease with this behavior called Type A, describe the behavior this way:

The major characteristic is an impulse to acquire more and more things in less and less time.

The chief reason for this race seems to be a deep insecurity, that one must continue to acquire, produce, achieve, or all is lost. And one failure might wipe out all of one's success.

Type A's are engrossed with numbers, impatient about insignificant things, often watching the time with "hurry sickness," (so following a slow car or waiting in line is unbearable). A free-floating hostility arises, so at times it's impossible to convince this person that true goodness actually exists. There is little desire for any intellectual or spiritual process, little knowledge of one's own capacities/limits, lack of interest in broader satisfactions of life and culture, hence narrow interests/vocation.

Geared and reinforced by our work and society, we just go on faster and faster or pause once when necessary, with real anxiety or hostility.

Why is this a part of us? Partly because we find the trend imbedded in our own history and values, as pragmatism yielded to a full, unbridled drive to acquire material benefit.

Good old American optimism loosely covered our striving to be gods. And good old American industry has seen us setting up our private kingdoms on earth. And even for the highest of virtues, this way of living has proved a hindrance, short-livable, and destructive for our personal lives and our victims.

The best analogy I can bring in is my own story of the first day I rode a bicycle. I was very young, scared, with no understanding of machinery. My Dad, on the sidewalk, holding the bicycle, nonchalant, told me how to pedal forward. I asked, fearing disaster, "Dad, what if I fall off?" He replied that I wouldn't fall off if I kept pedalling, and if I started to tip over, just

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<sup>9</sup>Meyer Friedman and Ray H. Rosenman, Type A Behavior and Your Heart (Conn.: Fawcett Crest, 1974).

pedal a little faster. He pushed me off, I weaved all over, afraid of falling off. I started to pedal faster, and then I realized, Dad didn't show me how to stop. Afraid, I pedalled faster and faster, all the while shouting over my shoulder to Dad, "Help! Help! I don't know how to stop!!" Just imagine a good father running hard down the street after his fast-racing daughter, who is crying for him to help her!!

How many of us are caught up going faster and faster, fearing to stop, to understand, and calling over our shoulders for help!!!

In the end, as I kept pedaling down the endless sidewalk, hopelessly caught in increasing speed, I heard my Dad shout from far behind, "Karen, stop pedalling and fall off!!"

Now, going back to Friedmann and Rosenman, an additional contribution besides their one finding is their section on "Re-engineering Your life," where one important step is to establish renewed myth, ritual, and tradition. They say, and I quote:

Perhaps you may think it absurd, in a book dedicated to the problem of coronary heart disease, that we as doctors bring in such seeming irrelevancies as myth, ritual, and tradition--particularly when our contemporary society is shedding itself as rapidly as it can of all three. Absurd we may be, except for one thing: this is the first time that a large group of individuals is attempting to live in so absolute a spiritual void. Our machines and computers still click conscientiously away, yet how strangely sad we have become, as we search without hope for the color, the glory, and the grandeur that we think life should sometimes shed upon us.<sup>10</sup>

In our race to do more and more in less and less time, to acquire things, we shall come to the end of our sidewalks, or pedalling-power, or see the absurdity of it all, then we have the choice to continue striving for life by dehumanizing ourselves, settling for animal survival, or seeking the very life principle we once exploited by facing true judgment and dying to old ways, the dynamic spirit which can renew us. As the people seek this Spirit and its freedom, they seek the reassurance of being all right, O.K., in relationship to God, giver and sustainer of life. Our faith calls this justification. Secular or religious, it is the same thing being sought in the 1970's.

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., pp. 224-225.



Now even this human need for justification is not enough to explain the quest, as the need for justification is an ancient one in different dress.

But let us admit that the 70's have not only seen a human need, but a world-wide phenomena transcending our time, surpassing any particular cultural projection. People have and do experience a reality beyond and within themselves which does not passively wait to be sought out, but which demonstrates actively its presence within human hearts and lives. Experienced as dynamic, unpredictable, life-changing, life-inspiring, this is the Holy Spirit, vehicle for God's gift of Grace, for justification to be a living reality.

Our Methodist church has always affirmed that the Holy Spirit can be experienced immediately and directly, and some people are now calling upon this Spirit to know God's love and power, in healing, in social change, trusting that if God's Spirit does truly exist, it should make a difference. And the slogan is heard today:

"Power that makes no difference is no power at all."

There are testimonials, indeed, from all types of people in all positions in life, but what perhaps we're seeing most today is a transition, a deep changing, where nothing's really settled yet, nor direction decided.

This is not time for us to join those who manipulate this spiritual thing for control of their lives, nor those curious but uninvolved, nor those experiencing just for self-satisfaction without commitment.

Now is a time when a deep-felt response is needed from us, to be involved and contributing to the shaping of our world's meaning. And 1976 is a unique and highly favorable time for each of us to understand, experience, and share in the Grace of God, known through Jesus Christ, and made real in experience of the Holy Spirit day by day.

Our entire core of faith rests upon the fact that "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us." And then might we know renewed life to not only be sustained, but to affect world changes for God's glory.

If one particular example of responsible engagement had to be given, it would not be a sermon, lesson, or counseling session, however. I'd offer this experience of a "plunge" into Los Angeles with a group of junior high students and some of their parents. The following description focuses only upon the central experiences and interpretations.

Our group of students and leaders arrived on Hollywood Boulevard late one Friday night; and in teams of four with adult protection, we walked the street for two hours, observing the prostitutes and pimps, junkies and transients, hawkers and shopkeepers, tourists, and residents. Returning to our lodging, many expressed their dismay, excitement, judgment, disgust, and surprise. Then, the evening ended with a serious study of Matthew 25:31-46, "as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers (and sisters), you did it to me." The youth asked, "Do you mean those people are my brothers and sisters?" "Is it talking about them and me?" No direct answer was given to them, but all were encouraged to reflect on it through the night.

Early in the morning, the group went to the Midnight Mission on skid row, Main Street, and, after a tour, they visited with the fifty or so broken men in the waiting room, who still had three hours to wait for lunch. Reluctant at first to speak with them, the youth soon became

reluctant to leave after talking. On the steps, one man showed us his scarred arms and told of blood bank exploitation in several major cities, and we considered the eventual prostitution of women who "hit bottom" and didn't even have a mission to go to. Then a visit to a downtown service center was followed by a meager lunch at MacArthur Park, joining hundreds of elderly with nothing to do. We found a drunk in comotose condition on the sidewalk; a judgment preacher who mocked our girls for wearing slacks, a whole variety of people of several nationalities. Then, we drove away to the hilltop where Forest Lawn quietly hid. After observing the wealth and pious religion of Forest Lawn, our group sat down together to talk. What had we seen this day? What did we enjoy doing? No one found the encounters with people boring or disgusting, but several fell asleep at Forest Lawn or became distracted.

When asked, "Now, friends, if we are able, where would you like to spend more time?" everyone pointed down the hill back to the center of town. "Let's go back with the people!"

Where do we belong? Not on a hill, removed in death-like, stillness and constructed beauty, but in the world, disturbing as it surely is at times. The plunge continued with samples of other religions and cultures (Greek orthodox mass, Samoan service and feast), and of course, a time in the evening to stretch, run, play, and

relax. The fruits of that week-end could be seen internally for the group as well as externally. The group became more committed to its purpose of confirmation, reflected greater understanding of each other, showed more openness to learning as a result of its focus, and worked in the following months to gather food and clothes to take back to their brothers and sisters on Main Street. Greater fruits may come of it, but the major point is that this entire event was planned with a focus upon the whole Christian experience of life and an openness to its possibilities. The main goal was not specifically scripture teaching, group prayer, a mission project, or review of human pluralism. The goal was to initiate responsiveness, encourage participation, and sense belonging in a broader environment than known before. Focused upon the Christian view of reality, we could be open to the Spirit's movement within and about us, and open to the words and images of the Spirit's message, our view of reality matured.

To summarize the responses outlined in this project, the following questions regarding a "spiritual life" program raise key concerns for a caring, ministerial response:

1. "What need is this program addressing?"
2. "Is a human, enabling response possible to this need?"

3. "What words and images play a central role in the proposed program and can I accept them personally?"
4. "Does this program focus upon behavior modification or does it promote understanding?"
5. "Does this program promote some kind of participation?"
6. "Does this program promote a commitment/faith beyond activity for its own sake?"
7. "Does this program reflect a bias towards the verbal or the symbolic function, and if so, where does the other function belong?"
8. "Does this program reflect a relationship to the community and global world, or does it negate certain hard aspects of reality?"
9. "Does this program acknowledge its limits and point to sources of life beyond itself and its members, or does it foster self-sufficiency?"
10. "What difference shall this entire program make in my life, according to its goals and to my own needs?"

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## APPENDIX



## SCHEMATIC DRAWING OF INNER FUNCTIONS

